

STATE OF CALIFORNIA SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY - RECOMMENDATION

**Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program
Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control,
River and Coastal Protection Act of 2006 (Proposition 84)**

Subregion: EAST Counties: INYO AND MONO
Applicant: CALIFORNIA TROUT
Project Title: EASTERN SIERRA IRWMP LAUNCH PROJECT
Application Number: SNC 070357

PROJECT SCOPE

California Trout will initiate a process to establish a collaborative regional water planning team in Inyo and Mono Counties to address multiple water issues, increase stakeholder coordination across jurisdictional boundaries to develop high cost-benefit projects, and streamline the disbursement of funding to distinct regions. Water issues to be addressed include: ground water management, preservation of working landscapes, improvement of water structures and facilities, control and elimination of invasive species, protection and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat, and reduction or prevention of soil erosion. This project will compile the information necessary to develop an Eastern Sierra Regional Water Plan (ESRWP).

Specifically, the project actions will include:

- Conducting outreach to stakeholders
- Recruiting, selecting, and contracting for a facilitator and a grant writer
- Developing a governance structure, regional boundaries, goals and objectives, data management strategies, and a planning process
- Identifying, collecting, and analyzing existing local water and land use planning documents and data and synthesizing the information into a comprehensive report
- Conducting monthly coordination meetings
- Establishing and maintaining an ESRWP web-site
- Drafting and finalizing an ESRW Planning document

In-kind and financial support of \$70,236 has been provided by the Sierra Nevada Alliance, CAL Trout, Friends of the Inyo, Inyo National Forest, and Los Angeles Department of Water and Power.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends funding this project at the requested amount of \$49,663.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

- Mono Lake Committee
- CA Department of Fish and Game
- Owens Valley Indian Water Commission
- Lundy Mutual Water Company
- June Lake Public Utility District
- University of California, Santa Barbara – Sierra Nevada Aquatic Research Lab and Valentine Preserve
- Mammoth Mountain Ski Area
- The Andrea Lawrence Institute for Mountains and Rivers
- The Owens Valley Committee
- Eastern Sierra Land Trust
- Amargosa Conservancy
- Eastern Sierra Audubon Society
- Ecosystem Sciences Foundation
- Inyo County Board of Supervisors
- Mono County Board of Supervisors

PROJECT SCHEDULE

DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES	TIMELINE
Conduct outreach to stakeholders	July 2008 – September 2008
Recruit, select, and contract for a facilitator and a grant writer	July 2008
Develop a governance structure, regional boundaries, goals and objectives, data management strategies, and a planning process	August 2008 – October 2008
Identify, collect, and analyze existing local water and land use planning documents and data and synthesize the information into a comprehensive report	August 2008 – October 2008
Conduct monthly coordination meetings	July 2008 – June 2009
Establish and maintain an ESRWP website	October 2008 – June 2009
Draft and finalize ESRW Planning document	November 2008-March 2009
Complete and submit six-month progress report to SNC	January 2009
Final Report/Final Payment Request	July 2009

PROJECT COSTS

PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES	TOTAL SNC FUNDING
Project Director salary	\$9,000
Coordinating Committee expenses (travel, per diem)	4,000
Administrative Assistant salary	4,600
Meeting expenses (materials and facilities)	1,000
Consultants (Facilitator and Grant writer)	26,548
Administrative fees	4,515
GRAND TOTAL	\$49,663

Eastern Sierra IRWMP Launch Project for Submission to the Sierra Nevada Conservancy

Goal and Objectives

The long-term goal of the Eastern Sierra Integrated Regional Water Management Planning Launch Project (*IRWMP Launch Project*) is to initiate a process leading to the completion of an integrated regional water management plan. The primary objective of the Project is to establish an IRWM Planning process and funding proposal centered on watersheds in Mono and Inyo Counties that will (1) enhance and facilitate coordination across the region, (2) develop and implement projects that are multi-benefit, (3) attract funding necessary for the implementation of projects contained within the “plan”, and (4) raise the profile and recognition of water management needs and possibilities in the Eastern Sierra, and specifically Mono and Inyo Counties.

This IRWMP Launch Project represents Phase I of this long-term plan. In the IRWMP Launch Project, a team of Eastern Sierra water resource stakeholders, with the help of a consultant from the Sierra Nevada Alliance, will launch a broad stakeholder based IRWM Planning process and governance structure for Mono and Inyo Counties and associated watersheds.

Need

IRWM Planning is the state’s latest management strategy to address multiple water issues, coordinate across jurisdictional boundaries, develop high cost-benefit projects, reduce local conflict, and streamline the disbursement of funding to distinct regions. The State is allocating millions of dollars for IRWM Planning and Implementation through Prop 50 and Prop 84.

To date, there are a number of state-funded IRWMPs in the Sierra: Cosumnes, American, Bear, Yuba (CABY); Feather; Tahoe-Sierra; Mokelumne-Amador Calaveras; Tuolumne/Stanslaus, and Yuba County Water Agency IRWMPs. Though this may sound like a number of plans, there remain large blocks of contiguous watershed areas within the Sierra-Cascade range that are not yet part of any IRWMP. Areas not identified in an IRWMP cannot access the major source of state funding for water resource management. In addition, IRWM Plans could also become requirements or at least extra credit on other state-funded grant opportunities. Therefore to ensure adequate funding is available for water management IRWM Plans are an increasingly important component of regional water management activities given climate change and growing California population.

Through Prop 84, the state is divided into Funding Areas, which are each given a funding allocation. The IRWMP Lahontan Funding Area is allocated \$27 M. Currently, there are three DWR-funded IRWMPs in the Lahontan Funding Area – The Tahoe-Sierra, Antelope Valley, and Mojave IRWMPs. There is no existing IRWMP covering

Mono and Inyo Counties and their corresponding major watersheds: Mono Basin, Owens Watershed.

Urgency

The nature of this project is urgent and timely given DWR's proposed Prop 84 IRWMP timeline. The Prop 84 IRWMP program will likely only have one round of Planning grant funding, currently scheduled for request for proposals in summer 2008. These planning grant funds are critical to building the capacity of the Mono-Inyo IRWMP to develop its Plan during 2008 – 2009. As stated above, without an IRWM Plan, the Mono-Inyo area will not be able to access significant water resource funding available through Prop 84 IRWMP program nor other state grants with eligibility requirements linked to IRWMPs.

Therefore, the timing for this IRWMP Launch Grant must start as soon as possible to deliver the expected outcome of a planning grant submission to DWR by its deadline.

This IRWMP Launch Project is timely and necessary in order to ensure that the organizations and agencies in this region can access the IRWMP funding available to the Lahontan Funding Area.

Expected Outcome

The expected outcome of this IRWMP Launch Project is the development of a Planning Grant Proposal, to DWR's IRWMP Program submitted in late summer to fall 2008. In the past, these Planning grants have ranged around \$500,000 to fund development of an IRWM Plan. Building off the Plan, regions then develop Implementation Proposals to DWR for project funding.

This overall outcome will be supported by a number of smaller objectives including:

- Identification of and outreach to stakeholders in water management and disadvantaged communities,
- Facilitated regional workshops to define regional boundaries; develop a governance plan; identify a regional management authority; and collect existing water resource plans and,
- Scaling up of water management activities in a manner that promotes transparency among and between a broad coalition of stakeholders

This IRWMP Launch Project will enable the long-term expected outcomes and benefits of an IRWMP including: development and implementation of an IRWM Plan; state funding for implementation of the plan; higher level of coordination and collaboration between a broad range of water resource stakeholders in the region; and coordination between this IRWMP and others in the region and state.

The Sierra Nevada Conservancy's funding of this project will enable the region to leverage millions of dollars from the state for collaboratively developed water resource management.

Replicability

Over the last couple years, a number of entities in this region have engaged in disparate exploratory discussions about creating an IRWMP. In fact, the Inyo County Water Department applied for a DWR IRWMP Implementation grant for their Lower Owens Restoration Plan (LORP) but did not receive funding.

In an attempt to build off initial efforts and bring together these disparate discussions, the Sierra Nevada Alliance began convening several members of the Eastern Sierra's conservation community and talking with some water agency representatives to initiate discussions regarding the launch of an IRWM planning process. In February 2008, conservation representatives held individual meetings with water agency and resource agency representatives to gauge potential support and commitment towards the IRWM Project Launch and invite them to a larger stakeholder meeting.

With help from these same conservation groups, the Sierra Nevada Alliance hosted an open invitation stakeholder meeting on February 22, 2008. In this meeting, the Alliance provided an overview of IRWMPs and their benefits; facilitated a discussion on defining the region and stakeholders; and mapped out potential Phases of planning and implementation. The group was enthusiastic about the prospects of the launch and scheduled a second stakeholder meeting for March 14, 2008.

During the meeting convened on March 14th, 2008, there were 33 participants representing an array of resource agencies, NGOs as well as other interested stakeholders. At this meeting there was overwhelming support to move forward on the proposed project. More specifically, a Coordination Committee was formed and a preliminary Governance structure adopted (see Attachment C). Based on the agreement of all parties, two meetings are now scheduled in April with the goal of defining geographical boundaries, establishing formal agreements via an MOU with participating stakeholders and identification of potential candidates responsible for developing the Pre-Planning proposal. Simply put, there is tremendous momentum at this time and without necessary funding, it is unlikely the resources necessary to leverage this momentum to complete the Pre-Planning proposal will be realized.

As a result of these preliminary actions, this project team has already received 14 Letters of Support for this IRWMP Launch concept proposal from various stakeholders including resource agencies, Counties, conservation groups, and water agencies. This IRWMP Launch Project will build off the momentum and information developed at these initial kickoff meetings.

Furthermore, this IRWMP Launch Project will build off of successful Sierra IRWMP models from the CABY, Feather, and Tahoe-Sierra IRWMPs. These IRWMP models have included a broad range of stakeholders, developed balanced governance structure and processes, developed multi-benefit projects implemented by stakeholders partnering across sectors; and evaluated and prioritized projects for funding.

Documentation of the processes leading towards the establishment of the IRWMP will take place with relevant information hosted on a website. Doing so will allow all interested parties to understand the steps taken to achieve development and implementation of the Plan providing a pathway for new plans to be developed. Groups in this region already have a host of collaborative projects through which they coordinate and develop projects for mutual benefit. The IRWMP Launch Project will build off of these existing collaborations and any existing plans to create the foundation for the Eastern Sierra IRWMP.

Land and Water Benefits

IRWMPs offer benefits that go beyond funding. IRWMPs can reduce local conflict if they are conducted with high levels of collaboration and integration; help identify multi-benefit consensus projects that are “low hanging fruit”; and develop alliances across sectors that enable stronger more competitive projects. Alliances formed across sectors can be used to influence water resources management at a state level. Furthermore, IRWMPs also offer a way to coordinate from region to region, accessing broad stakeholder groups through the regional entities. IRWMPs may even become a regional basis for the State Water Plan. Finally, the broad stakeholder forum can create an opportunity to effectively address water resource issues such as water supply, water quality, habitat and environment, recreation, and land use. With seed funding from the Conservancy (and with match funding from California Trout) it is anticipated that the proposed IRWMP process will provide the means to leverage initial public funding from DWR of approximately \$500,000 and subsequently far more funding from DWR for implementation IRWMP projects expected to be several million dollars. Issues we anticipate addressing in the Planning proposal and through future implementation projects are:

1. Ground water management
2. Preservation and/or enhancement of agricultural, forest, rangeland, or other working landscapes
3. Improvement of physical structures or facilities
4. Control and elimination of invasive species
5. Protection and enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat
6. Improvement of physical structures or facilities
7. Reduction or prevention of soil erosion

Sierra Nevada Conservancy Program Goals

The Eastern Sierra IRWMP Launch Project addresses the Sierra Nevada Conservancy Program goals in the following ways:

Provide increased opportunities for tourism and recreation – The IRWM Plan will address recreation and tourism in a variety of ways through its relation to water resources.

Protect, conserve, and restore the region’s physical, cultural, archaeological, historical, and living resources – The IRWM Plan will address water management